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WHITE PLAINS RACIAL BALANCE PLAN.

BY- JOHNSON, CARROLL F.

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IN WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK, A SUBURBAN CITY WITH A PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OF 8,700, 17 PERCENT NEGRO, MEASURES WERE TAKEN TO INSURE RACIAL BALANCE THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM. IN THE PAST THE CITY HAD INITIATED VARIOUS TEMPORARY SCHOOL DESEGREGATION ACTIONS, BUT BY 1964 THE NECESSITY OF A PERMANENT SOLUTION HAD BECOME APPARENT. SINCE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL THE CITY'S STUDENTS WERE ALREADY INTEGRATED IN A SINGLE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL, AND ONLY MINOR EFFORTS WERE REQUIRED TO INTEGRATE THE CITY'S THREE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS, ADMINISTRATORS FOCUSED ON DESEGREGATING THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. AT THIS TIME ONE 67 PERCENT NEGRO CENTER-CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WAS CLOSED, AND ATTENDANCE AREAS WERE RE-ESTABLISHED SO THAT THE OTHER 10 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS COULD RECEIVE THE TRANSFERRED PUPILS. DEVELOPED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THIS PLAN WAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY THE SCHOOL SYSTEM'S PRINCIPALS AND SUPERVISORS, THE CITYWIDE PTA COUNCIL, AND THE WHITE PLAINS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION. PRELIMINARY EVALUATIONS INDICATE THAT THE INTEGRATED WHITE AND NEGRO PUPILS ARE MAKING SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND THAT THE NEGRO PUPILS ARE MAKING THE NECESSARY PEER GROUP ADJUSTMENTS. MOREOVER THE MAJORITY OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS CONTINUE TO VOICE THEIR SUPPORT. NEVERTHELESS THE TEACHERS HAVE EMPHASIZED A NEED FOR ADEQUATE CLASS SIZE AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND PARENTS HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT ANXIOUS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S ADJUSTMENT. THE PTA HAS BEEN WORRIED ABOUT INVOLVING CENTER-CITY NEGRO PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN ATTEND OUTLYING SCHOOLS. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA'S CITIES, SPONSORED BY THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 16-18, 1967. (LB)

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WHITE PLAINS RACIAL BALANCE PLAN

Prepared by
Carroll F. Johnson, Superintendent of Schools
White Plains, New York

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in America's Cities
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White Plains, the County Seat of Westchester County in New York, is a suburban city with a population of approximately 55,000, and a kindergarten through 12th grade public school enrollment of 8,700. Seventeen percent of all pupils are Negro and most Negro students are children of economically disadvantaged families living in the center of the city.

In 1964 we closed a predominantly Negro elementary school located in the heart of the city and began transporting most of its pupils to predominantly white elementary schools in outlying residential areas. Assignments were made under a Racial Balance Policy adopted by the Board of Education on April 16, 1964. Under that policy, the Negro enrollment in each school must be within a range of

approximately 10 percent minimum to approximately 30 percent maximum.

Our comprehensive senior high school already was integrated by virtue of being the only senior high school in the city. To maintain the prescribed Racial Balance in our three junior high schools, it was necessary to make only minor adjustments in some existing attendance areas.

Racial balance was achieved in the White Plains public schools without demonstrations or representations from Civil Rights groups: we acted before the crisis stage.

The goals we established as a framework for our Racial Balance Plan were: 1. To maintain the neighborhood school for as many children as possible; 2. To keep change to a minimum, for both white and Negro pupils; 3. To provide an equitable distribution of Negro pupils among all schools; 4. To insure both permanence and flexibility in implementing the Racial Balance Policy.

In closing Rochambeau, the center city school where Negroes constituted 67 percent of the 500-pupil enrollment, it was necessary to redraw attendance lines for the other 10 elementary schools and to reassign 20 percent of our elementary pupils. In some instances reassignment meant that a pupil was only a few blocks farther away from school and could still walk to school each day. Children who were assigned to schools more than one and one-half miles from home were transported by school bus. The new transportation policy -- we previously had no school bus service -- involved busing for one of every 10 elementary pupils. However, no student travels more than four miles from home to school.

Rochambeau School was converted to an adult education and Manpower Development Training Center and thus has retained its function as a neighborhood facility while becoming a focal point of citywide educational activity.

The road to full integration of the White Plains schools was long and never smooth. The closing of Rochambeau actually culminated the efforts of many years to prevent de facto segregation from developing in our public schools. In the end, the best solution was the one we chose. Residential housing patterns and the concentration of urban renewal and low-income housing projects in the center of the city made it impossible to integrate our schools without an explicit balance policy coupled with busing of students.

Though the Board of Education and the school administration had been struggling with this problem since 1957, I do not believe that we could have solved it even one year sooner than we did. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune." We were able to close Rochambeau when we did in 1964 because the national climate for abolishing de facto segregation had become sufficiently plain to the residents of White Plains. They saw the handwriting on the wall. They also had witnessed the earlier attempts of Board and administration to solve the problem of piecemeal reassignments, periodic adjustment of attendance lines and construction of new schools. It was evident that everything had been done -- short of providing transportation for racial balance.

It was also our good fortune that we had only to deal with a minority group enrollment of 17 percent.

Most relevant to our success was the fact that we could balance racial percentages in our schools without removing white children from predominantly white schools and reassigning them to predominantly "Negro" facilities. The truth is that cross-busing would have presented major difficulties and might in the end have been rejected. Our residents are characteristically fair and their educational background is above-average. They wish for the most part to provide equal opportunity for all children -- even at some inconvenience to themselves. But I do not believe that they would have willingly sent their own children into center city schools to leaven the lot of disadvantaged pupils there.

We in White Plains take pride in the effectiveness of our Racial Balance Policy and in the community pride it has engendered. But we would not cite our plan as a blueprint for other communities. In many of our larger cities, only concerted action by all municipal agencies can possibly diminish de facto segregation in the schools. Nowhere can the schools alone effectively stop the tide of deprivation and discrimination. But we believe that the schools should and must do all that they can -- supply leadership, take initiative, face facts realistically, and accept their share of responsibility, recognizing that racial segregation, no matter what its cause, is harmful to minority and majority alike.

Although each community has cut its pattern of school integration to fit the community's peculiar socio-economic and geographic cloth, certain aspects of our White Plains experience may be applicable to other situations.

In retrospect, many of the steps we took were well advised and have been productive. In retrospect, we also see that we failed to do some things, and in some instances did things which we might better have left undone!

To put this retrospective wisdom in its proper context, it is first necessary to give you a brief chronology of our fight against the encroaching tide of de facto segregation.

Racial balance is not a recent concern in White Plains. Since World War II the number of minority group families has steadily increased, and the proportion of Negro pupils in the older schools of the city has increased more substantially. Various preventive measures were devised to counteract city housing patterns which were creating ghetto schools. We drew and redrew attendance areas. We chose school sites with integration in mind; the mid-nineteen fifties decision to build a single senior high for the entire city was largely dictated by the determination that segregation by color, economics, or social or academic status must never be an indirect result of Board of Education policy.

In planning for a new high school, the Board of Education considered numerous locations but it was apparent that two high schools would lead sooner or later to segregation -- no matter where a second high school might be located. Therefore, an all-city senior high was constructed and the former high school was converted into a combination elementary school and junior high school. The new senior high opened in 1960 and elementary and junior high attendance areas were rezoned at that time. The Post Road School, formerly a junior high, became an

elementary school at the same time the old high school was converted to junior high and elementary use. These changes established a much better racial balance among the junior high schools, which had come close to becoming predominantly white in one case and heavily Negro in another.

In 1957 the old Ferris Avenue Elementary School, which had maintained predominantly Negro enrollment was abandoned. Church Street School, a new elementary facility was opened and the Church Street attendance area drew from both center city and adjoining white residential neighborhoods to achieve a balanced enrollment. The Ferris Avenue School, before it was closed, had a Negro enrollment of 67 percent, whereas the percentage was reduced to 25 in the new Church Street School.

The real problem, however, was in the heart of the city where low income apartments in the urban renewal area were turning the schools into ghetto facilities. Attendance lines for the Rochambeau School were redrawn in 1960, reducing Negro enrollment from 57 to 46 percent. But the percentage was up to 53 by the following September, rose to 60 by 1963 and was up to 64 percent by mid-February of 1964 as new Negro families moved into the new high-rise housing facilities.

It was at this juncture that the Board of Education decided the time had come to seek a permanent solution. Although the mechanics of the plan we devised are directly related to the unique characteristics of our city, some aspects of the strategy through which we achieved school integration may be generally applicable.

A factor of major importance was the total commitment of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools. This commitment

is an absolute prerequisite. As details of the integration plan evolved, we also received the unanimous endorsement of the Administrative-Supervisory Staff, composed of all principals and supervisors in the city school system.

The PTA, which earlier had fought for scattered housing as opposed to low income apartment projects concentrated in the center city, also was a mainstay. The citywide PTA Council endorsed the racial balance plan not only on paper but, more important, vocally and visibly at all important public meetings on the subject. This PTA support lent the appearance of the extensive community support and prevented small groups of articulate opponents from upstaging the Board in public meetings and in newspaper accounts. I cannot emphasize too vigorously the importance of having an articulate, organized PTA play an active, highly visible role in the support of a step so potentially controversial.

Time for citizen education is another crucial element in the success or failure of such plans. The White Plains Board of Education and members of the administrative staff had met at intervals over a period of several years with citizens interested in school integration. During the winter and spring of 1963-64, when the Board was moving toward adoption of the Racial Balance Plan, these meetings were stepped up and were focused directly on specific solutions to the problem of racial imbalance in time for the opening of school in September of 1964. We met frequently with parents in the attendance area of Rochambeau School. We obtained consultants to work with us in connection with these meetings. After details of the balance plan were completed, the Board held its first meeting with representatives of all community organizations.

Attendance was by invitation, thus underlining the importance of the event, and of the "official" status of delegates sent by the various civic groups. Many meetings throughout the city followed.

Still another, and most important tactic, was keeping the press informed on a background basis as the plan evolved. The resultant news and feature coverage, and editorial support for the plan, were of inestimable value in gaining community acceptance.

To a lesser extent we involved the classroom teachers through the White Plains Teachers Association. The Association's executive board endorsed the plan and later appeared as amicus curiae when a group of six parents went to court in an effort to block integration.

We believe now, however, that we should have involved our teachers to a greater extent and in depth early in 1963-64 when we were still working out the details of our Racial Balance Plans. With the wisdom of hindsight, we would have established a joint teacher-administration committee to consider a kindergarten through 12th grade approach to human relations, grouping, discipline, and other problems which inevitably arise when any dramatic change is made in the human "mix" of a classroom or school building. There is no doubt in my mind that the three transitional years we have just undergone would have been even smoother had we more fully utilized the tremendous resources of our entire professional staff during the planning stages.

Even without advance involvement, the support and dedication of our teaching staff has been most impressive. In a confidential survey in June of 1965, at the end of the first year of racial balance,

89.5 percent of the teachers who answered survey questionnaires indicated approval of the plan and said it should be continued. Only six of the respondents indicated outright dissatisfaction. The continuing interest of all teachers has enabled us to make substantial progress since then in making integration a human success as well as a physical achievement.

This spring, the White Plains Teachers Association formed an equal educational opportunities committee, and the work of this group has been exceptional, indeed. The committee surveyed the entire professional staff to determine positive and negative aspects of integration and to ascertain how the teachers themselves think we can improve educational opportunity for AIL children -- white and Negro, privileged and underpriviliged.

This group's first report was presented in June to the Administrative-Supervisory Staff, setting forth guidelines for an in-service program in human relations, child development, and community resources, and pinpointing areas of professional concern. As a result, we shall be studying cross-grade grouping at the elementary level, a redefinition of the role of Helping Teacher, ways to maximize the use of supportive services provided by the school psychologist and guidance counselor, and audio-visual materials which could be incorporated in the various subject areas in order to promote interracial understanding.

As I have said, we in White Plains would be the last to claim full and complete success of our School Racial Balance Plan. What we have to tell is not a success story, achieved by some overnight magic, but a heartening story of solid progress -- socially and academically. We believe that we're on the right track, we believe the community is

better for having supported the schools in the step we took in the fall of 1964, and we can see at the end of this third year benefits to all pupils, white and Negro.

We are now in the midst of analyzing four-year achievement test scores, the teacher questionnaires administered this spring by the Equal Educational Opportunities Committee and parent questionnaires sent in March to a random sampling of the families listed in our school registration rolls. These data will form the basis for a full evaluation report on a racial balance plan. The report will be presented to the Board of Education and made public so that all residents may better understand both the problems we have encountered and the progress we have made in connection with school racial balance in White Plains.

A preliminary evaluation of the data indicates that the integration of our elementary schools has not impeded the academic progress of white children who were enrolled in all-white or mostly white schools prior to the plan, and that Negro youngsters who changed from a predominantly Negro elementary school in the center city to outlying elementary schools are making satisfactory peer group adjustments and are showing academic gains.

Preliminary findings on the basis of teacher and parent questionnaires indicate support for the racial balance plan by the majority of respondents. These questionnaires also reflect certain problems of adjustment associated with the integration plan. These include, on the part of teachers, emphasis on the need for reasonable class size and adequate supportive services, such as clerical services

and the assistance of school psychologists, social workers and home-school counselors. Negro parents have been concerned about the adjustment of the children to "new" schools, as any parent is when his child is transferred to a different setting. PTA units have been concerned about the difficulty of getting large numbers of center city parents to attend PTA meetings in the outlying elementary schools, and some PTA units and principals have conducted kaffee klatches in center city homes, or planned special meetings of particular interest in the schools, to draw Negro parents into fuller participation in and closer identification with the schools.

We who work in the classrooms and school offices each day have already observed many salutary results of the balance plan. We have seen individual pupils blossom academically and become more useful, productive students. We have noted with great satisfaction a definite change in attitudes, self-confidence, self-respect and ambition. We also have learned that we must give special attention to helping economically privileged children understand children from severely disadvantaged homes, and vice versa. Encouraging the development of mutual interests -- getting these youngsters to accept each other naturally and without self-consciousness - has been a continuing concern of the faculties in the newly integrated buildings. Substantial progress is evident. In the first weeks of the Racial Balance Plan, during the fall of 1964, the children who came to school in buses from the center city tended to stick together as a group on the playgrounds, in the cafeteria, and in class. But as the newcomers became adjusted to their new environments, and the children who had

already been in those schools became adjusted to the newcomers, the situation slowly changed. Now, three years later, there is less evidence of "cliques" based on color or socio-economic backgrounds.

We know, furthermore, that the racial balance plan has given impetus, along with Head Start, Project Able and other special programs, to the development of better teaching techniques, the acquisition of new and effective instructional materials, and the increasing individualization of instruction. That the community has also grown in its recognition of educational needs is evidenced by the passage of the tax limitation referendum on May 2. The limitation had been 1.5 percent of the five-year-average full value since 1952, and two previous referenda (in the spring and winter of 1963) failed to receive the 60 percent vote needed to increase the limit to 1.75 percent. This year, we received an affirmative vote of 67.8% establishing the new limitation. We consider this referendum success major evidence of community confidence in the public schools.

We believe the community takes rather substantial pride in a school board which had the courage to integrate its schools <u>before</u> any civil rights crises developed.

WHITE PLAINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ANALYSIS OF PUPIL REGISTRATION BY SCHOOL
SHOWING PER CENT NEGRO

School	10/1/63 Reg.	10/1/63 % N	4/1/64 % N	10/1/64 % N	10/1/65 % N	10/1/66 % N	4/1/67 Reg.	4/1/67 % N
ELEMENTARY								
Battle Hill	454	13.7	15.7	18.9	18.1	19.8	508	19.9
Church St.	386	34.2	32.1	23.7	21.4	26.2	374	24.9
East View	348	31.9	35.0	31.7	30.4	27.4	282	25.5
Geo. Wash.	338	--	.6	17.1	18.1	15.0	377	14.1
Highlands	379	2.9	2.6	12.6	10.7	10.9	425	10.8
Mamaroneck	523	10.5	9.7	19.2	21.7	24.6	613	24.6
North St.	314	.6	.6	15.8	16.3	19.1	362	18.5
Post Road	547	28.2	28.1	19.0	17.4	16.4	732	17.6
Ridgeway	441	.7	.7	16.5	14.7	16.1	501	13.8
Rochambeau	520	60.4	61.7	--	--	--	--	--
Rosedale	303	--	--	24.0	21.6	19.2	424	17.7
Total Elem.	4553	18.5	18.7	19.8	18.6	19.1	4598	18.6
JUNIOR HIGH								
Battle Hill	300	17.3	18.9	21.2	22.5	25.0	273	24.9
East View	803	15.7	15.1	15.3	14.7	15.1	837	14.9
Highlands	901	15.0	15.1	16.2	16.5	17.0	869	17.3
Total Jr.Hi.	2004	15.6	15.7	16.6	16.5	17.3	1979	17.3
SENIOR HIGH	2296	12.2	12.0	14.0	13.7	12.7	2191	12.4
GRAND TOTAL ALL SCHOOLS	8853	16.2	16.3	17.6	16.9	17.1	8768	16.8

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